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WHA/CAR FOR ALAIN NORMAN
EEB/TPP/MTA FOR ELIZA KOCH
L/CID FOR MARGUERITE WALTER
USAID/LAC/CAR FOR ROBERT BONCY

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CVIS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [XL](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR OURISMAN'S VISIT TO ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Classified By: CDA Clyde I. Howard for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (SBU) Ambassador Ourisman traveled to Antigua and Barbuda August 15-16, 2007, with Embassy Bridgetown USAID Director for the Eastern Caribbean and the Regional Security Officer. The Ambassador met privately with Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer, as well as Minister of Health, John Maginley. The Ambassador toured USAID's technical assistance programs and facilities, and launched the Antigua Business Investment Authority, the product of USAID assistance. Over 200 guests, including the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and Economy, and members of the diplomatic community and the private sector attended this launch. The Ambassador also presented the Royal Antigua and Barbuda Police Force with explosive countermeasures equipment donated by the Department's Antiterrorism Assistance Program. End Summary.

Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer

¶2. (C) In a bilateral meeting, Ambassador Ourisman and Prime Minister Spencer discussed USG technical cooperation, the June Caribbean Conference in Washington, deportees, September's United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), and both the Internet gaming and Half Moon Bay expropriation disputes. Attending the meeting from the Government of Antigua and Barbuda (GOAB) were Ambassador Colin Murdoch, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and GOAB

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Ambassador to Japan, Anthony Liverpool.

¶3. (C) USG ASSISTANCE: PM Spencer expressed appreciation for USAID's generous assistance with trade and investment capacity issues, noting that it was a demonstrable way of deepening the friendship between the United States and Antigua and Barbuda, as well as helping his country improve the investment climate and respond to new trade challenges. Ambassador Ourisman described USAID's support to the Antigua and Barbuda Investment Authority (ABIA) as a people-to-people endeavor, which is helping Antigua and Barbuda become more competitive in the global market. The Ambassador also informed PM Spencer that she would also be donating \$39,000 worth of bomb disposal equipment and related police training. The Ambassador reminded the Prime Minister of the USG's generous assistance with security and law enforcement in the

region, specifically noting the dvanced Passenger Information System (APIS). PM Spencer agreed APIS was very effective, especially for Cricket World Cup, and stated it will leave a significant and permanent legacy.

14. (C) DEPORTEES: PM Spencer congratulated the Ambassador for a successful Washington Caribbean Conference and expressed his excitement about the new direction of the U.S.-CARICOM partnership. The Prime Minister conveyed his satisfaction with the straightforward and candid approach to important issues that affected the Caribbean, among them the issue of deportees. PM Spencer admitted that he fully understands the rationale behind USG deportee policy, but insisted on more information sharing and suggested the creation of a deportee database and the provision of "tangible" USG assistance for deportee re-integration. The Ambassador informed PM Spencer that USG statistics on deportees commonly disagree with numbers generated in the Caribbean. She also described the pilot deportee project in Haiti and explained that President Bush and Secretary Rice carefully listened to the Caribbean's concerns on the topic. PM Spencer told the Ambassador that these were clear steps in the right direction and suggested that the pilot project be spread throughout CARICOM and that information on deportees should be more easily available to affected governments, possibly in the form of a database.

15. (C) INTERNET GAMING: PM Spencer claimed that Internet gaming is an important economic niche with significant benefits that is now in serious jeopardy as a result of the USG's invoking Article 21. PM Spencer expressed that the GOAB is prepared to look at the issues raised by the USG and find a solution based on "some modalities" which he believes will create a "win-win" situation for both countries. PM Spencer noted that the WTO regulatory body will soon act, and that a serious dialogue is needed to prevent both parties from moving in their own directions. PM Spencer shared his belief that an Internet gaming sector can exist that both takes into account USG concerns and meets international regulatory standards. The Ambassador responded that every U.S. state has its own regulations for gambling, but that Congressional legislation does not allow for cross-border Internet gambling for important moral reasons. The Ambassador told PM Spencer that the United States accepts the WTO ruling and understands the GOAB's concerns as well, but will continue to work within WTO guidelines and U.S. legislation. PM Spencer pressed further with his plea for dialogue and the Ambassador promised to convey his concerns to Washington.

16. (C) HALF MOON BAY: The Ambassador raised the expropriation issue of Half Moon Bay and compensation for the Amcit owners. She noted that since the Privy Council ruled in favor of the GOAB's expropriation of the property, the government must now determine and provide adequate compensation to the owner. PM Spencer responded that, in accordance with Antiguan law, the GOAB has initiated property valuation and that the next step is for the American party to conduct its own valuation. Both parties can then negotiate an acceptable solution with the assistance of a formal arbitration board if necessary. PM Spencer assured the Ambassador that it is not in the GOAB's interest to further prolong the dispute and promised that it would not procrastinate, as it has already received offers from over 15 investors. He added that he does not see any major hurdles ahead in resolving the issue once and for all.

Donation of Explosive Countermeasure Equipment

17. (U) The Ambassador officially presented USD 39,000 worth of explosive countermeasure equipment to the Antigua and Barbuda Royal Police Force (ABRPF). The equipment was purchased by the Department's Antiterrorism Assistance Program (ATA). The equipment included a bomb suit, disrupter kit, water canon, ammunition, and bomb technician tools. Embassy Bridgetown RSO explained the technical details of the equipment to the media. As a result of the DS/ATA-donated

bomb technician equipment and previous DS/ATA-provided training, Antigua and Barbuda will have the necessary technical expertise to identify, assess, locate, neutralize, and dispose of explosive devices.

Minister of Health John H. Maginley

¶8. (C) Ambassador Ourisman focused on HIV/AIDS in Antigua and Barbuda in a meeting with Minister of Health John Maginley. Maginley outlined the effects of HIV/AIDS on Antigua and Barbuda, particularly emphasizing the immigrants from countries with significant HIV/AIDS problems, such as the Dominican Republic and Guyana. Maginley noted that many non-residents come to Antigua and Barbuda because it is one of the few CARICOM countries, along with Barbados, that offers free and universal care for HIV/AIDS patients. Maginley conveyed his frustration that a significant portion of international donor funding for HIV/AIDS is allocated to policy work, conferences, and travel, with relatively little allocated to on-the-ground assistance to individuals living with, affected by, or exposed to HIV/AIDS. Maginley noted, however, that USAID's HIV/AIDS work with the International HIV/AIDS Alliance is an exception and praised USAID for properly identifying and reaching out to the most vulnerable populations and providing preventive information and referrals. Minister Maginley also voiced his concern that Antigua and Barbuda's modest stock of trained nurses continue to migrate to the United States and other countries, further depleting the population of trained health care providers in Antigua and Barbuda.

Ambassador Site Visit to USAID Programs and Facilities

¶9. (U) The Ambassador visited staff of the International HIV/AIDS Alliance (IHAA), USAID's implementation partner, where she was briefed on the HIV/AIDS situation in Antigua and Barbuda, more specifically the dynamics of social norms, personal behavior, and the effects of stigma and discrimination. The Ambassador also visited USAID's environmental and biodiversity programs, which include technical assistance to the GOAB's Department of Fisheries.

This assistance is for protecting Antigua's few remaining mangrove forests and assisting the GOAB to develop a management plan for Codrington Lagoon, which was recently designated a national park.

Ambassador Launch of ABIA

¶10. (U) The highlight of the trip was the Ambassador's launching of the official opening of the Antigua and Barbuda Investment Authority (ABIA). (Note: The establishment of the ABIA has been a major deliverable of USAID's Caribbean Open Trade Support project, which provided the Ministry of Finance and Economy training, strategic planning, and institutional capacity building. End Note.) Over 200 people attended the ceremony, including PM Spencer and Minister of Finance and Economy, Dr. Errol Cort, as well as Cabinet and Parliamentary members, members of the diplomatic community, high-ranking government officials, and prominent members of the local and international business community. In his keynote address, Minister Cort explicitly recognized and

thanked the USG for its support of the ABIA, characterizing it as a "practical and demonstrable expression of USG support for Antigua and Barbuda." In her remarks, the Ambassador noted the necessity of small economies such as that of Antigua and Barbuda to become more open to foreign investment and better able to compete in an open international trading regime.

Comment: Benefits of the Caribbean Conference

¶11. (C) Because of Half Moon Bay and the Internet gambling

dispute, Antigua and Barbuda is arguably the Eastern Caribbean country with the most pressing disagreements with the United States currently. However, thanks to the June Conference on the Caribbean and the strengthened good will between the United States and the Eastern Caribbean it created, the Ambassador and her counterparts were able to focus on the positive aspects of the U.S.-Antigua/Barbuda relationship, namely the various facets of USG foreign assistance to Antigua. Although contentious issues did arise, the environment for these meetings was much more positive than would have been the case without the Conference.

HOWARD